

editorial

security and surveillance

Kevin Stenson puts this issue in context.

Market-driven liberal democracies face threats to their security and also media and politically-stoked crises of anxiety and fear. These factors create opportunities for the security industry and the rapidly advancing surveillance technologies it markets to citizens, commercial firms and public bodies, to flourish.

This issue assembles a distinguished international cast of theorists and researchers of security and surveillance. Key dilemmas include debates about the trade off between allaying fears with greater security, and not sacrificing the liberties which distinguish our societies from authoritarian ones that rule through torture, intimidation, fear, the control of information and the suppression of dissent. Furthermore, increased security can amplify our risks. For example, as Whitson and Haggerty argue, fear of identity fraud and other internet crime occasions greater extensions of surveillance, profiling and data banks that, ironically, increase our vulnerability to predators. And the internet creates new temptations, for example, to download child pornography, to which many thousands succumb, straining the capacity of the police and justice agencies to manage the shoals caught in the surveillance nets (Metcalf).

Montesquieu, Adams, Locke and other Enlightenment architects of liberal democracy devised laws and constitutional measures to provide checks and balances to concentrated power, traditionally understood in terms of the (separate powers) of the executive, legislative and judicial branches of authority. A new industry of interpretation has emerged to make sense of and balance new technological powers and their design, inconceivable to eighteenth century Enlightenment thinkers (Lyon, Jones).

New satellite tracking makes possible 24/7 incessant monitoring, the elimination of hiding places and the dissolution of the boundaries between public and private spaces (Nellis,

Paterson). Yet, it is heartening, as Gilbert shows, that engineers are struggling to escape their comfort zone of technical problem-solving language to confront the ethical use of their technologies. However, Edwardes et al. remind us that politicians now justify the introduction of intrusive technologies like ID cards in the name of the 'common good', using a communitarian emphasis on the needs of the many rather than the liberal emphasis on individual and minority rights. Spalek and McCahill show how this can have a troubling and polarising impact on Muslim minorities and the 'usual suspects', the poor, homeless, mentally ill, addicted, and illegal immigrants. But, it remains unclear who monitors how our leaders define the common good. Who guards the guards?

We await a Montesquieu for the surveillance age, but we do have the recent 'Report on the Surveillance Society' from the UK Information Commissioner, Richard Thomas, which has achieved greater global impact than any other document in presenting the core issues to opinion leaders and the public. In our interview with the Commissioner, without endorsing gloomy dystopian visions, he eloquently argues for the need for public awareness, vigilance and applying the brakes to the rapid advance and application of surveillance technologies by public and commercial institutions. It is appropriate that this document comes from the UK. Just as Northern Ireland during the Troubles provided an experimental chamber for new security technologies and systems later used on mainland Britain, so the UK now provides such a benchmark for the globe; as Lippert shows this even inspires liberal Canada. Our citizens are the most watched in the world. We have about 4.2 million CCTV cameras and it is estimated that urban citizens are caught on camera around 300 times a day. This reaches its peak in the City of London, the richest spot on earth (Wood), surrounded by a 'ring of steel' following a devastating IRA bomb, and pioneering

automatic car number plate recognition and other sophisticated technologies.

9/11 and the 7/7 tube bombings have accelerated long-term trends in legislation and technology roll out. Against opposition from sections of the judiciary and civil liberties lobbies, the UK has echoed the US Patriot Act in constructing this armoury, for example with the Terrorism Act 2000, the Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act 2001, the Prevention of Terrorism Act 2005 and the Terrorism Act 2006. This builds upon the provisions against anti-social behaviour in the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and later legislation introducing Anti-Social Behaviour Orders, acceptable behaviour contracts, curfews, dispersal orders, long-term detention without charge or trial and other constraining measures. These tend to dissolve the boundaries between criminal and civil law, the maintenance of order in peace time and the waging of war. Ericson sees this international trend, linked with the new surveillance technologies, as the development of 'counter law', eroding the foundations of liberal conceptions of justice and due process.

For academics, police and criminal justice professionals, this adds to our agendas of work and keeps us in business. As yet, we know little about the long-term impact of CCTV and other surveillance technologies on behaviour and the attitude of citizens (Goodman). Research with young people, the target of much surveillance, indicates a deep ambivalence about welcoming the possibility of greater protection but fear of being labelled categorically as deviant (Martin et al., Hilton and Mills). For example, the pervasive use of CCTV in probation hostels may quieten residents but how far does it displace troublesome conduct to other spaces (Heath)? And the use of surveillance technologies can create a taken for granted conformity within industrial complexes and retail parks (Button), but how far does this expand a population of dangerous and unwanted 'others' excluded from such places and the bosom of 'respectable' society?

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